

CLAIMS**WHAT IS CLAIMED:**

1. A method of communicating with a first computing device, said method comprising the acts of:
- encrypting information destined for said first computing device;
 - creating an HTTP request which includes an address of said first device and the encrypted information; and
 - transmitting said HTTP request to a second computing device different from said first computing device.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said HTTP request comprises a POST request, and wherein said encrypted information is included in the body of said POST request.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said HTTP request comprises a GET request, and wherein said encrypted information is appended to said GET request as a parameter.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said information is encrypted using a symmetric key, and wherein said symmetric key is a shared secret available to said first computing device and not available to said second computing device.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the act of creating a web page which includes a hyperlink associated with said HTTP request, wherein said transmitting act comprises transmitting said web page to said second computing device.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said second computing device is associated with a purchaser of content, wherein said first computing device provides said content, and

wherein the encrypted information includes information relating to the purchase of said content.

5 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the encrypted information includes information which identifies said purchaser.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the encrypted information includes a timestamp.

10 9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the acts of:
computing a hash of said information prior to encryption; and
including said hash in said HTTP request.

15 10. The method of claim 9, wherein said hash is computed using an SHA1 algorithm.

11. A computer readable medium having computer-executable instructions to perform the method of claim 1.

20 12. A method of communicating with a first computing device through a second computing device, said method comprising the acts of:

encrypting information such that the encrypted information is decryptable by a secret;

25 transmitting the encrypted information to said second computing device, said encrypted information being transmittable to said first computing device upon instruction from a user operating said second computing device, wherein said secret is not accessible to either said second computing device or said user; and

sharing said secret by performing either of the following acts:

providing said secret to said first computing device or to a party associated with said first computing device; or

receiving said secret from said first computing device or from a party associated with said first computing device.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein said first computing device is associated with a purchaser of content, and wherein said second computing device provides said content.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the encrypted information includes information relating to the purchase of said content.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein said transmitting act comprises transmitting the encrypted information over a wide-area network.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein said wide-area network comprises the Internet.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein said transmitting act comprises transmitting to said second computing device an HTTP request which includes an address of said first computing device and the encrypted information.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said HTTP request comprises a POST request, and wherein said encrypted information is included in the body of said POST request.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein said HTTP request comprises a GET request, and wherein said encrypted information is appended to said GET request as a parameter.

20. The method of claim 17, further comprising the act of creating a web page which includes a link associated with said HTTP request, wherein said transmitting act comprising transmitting said web page to said second computing device, and wherein the user instruction to transmit the encrypted information to said first computing device comprises the user using an input device associated with said second computing device to actuate said link.

21. The method of claim 12, wherein said secret comprises a symmetric key, and wherein said encrypting act comprises encrypting said information with said symmetric key.

22. The method of claim 12, further comprising the act of including a timestamp in the encrypted information.

23. The method of claim 12, further comprising the act of appending a hash of said information to said encrypted information, said hash being computed prior to encryption of said information.

24. A method of facilitating electronic content distribution comprising the acts of:

providing, to a first party for use on a first computing device, a first set of computer-executable instructions which encrypts information based on a unique id that maps into a shared secret, the encrypted information being includable in an HTTP request which includes a network address of a second computing device; and

providing, to a second party for use on said second computing device, a second set of computer-executable instructions which decrypts the encrypted information.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein said first party comprises a seller of electronic content, wherein said second party comprises a provider of electronic content sold

by said first party, and wherein said encrypted information relates to a transaction between said first party and a consumer of electronic content.

26. The method of claim 24, wherein said HTTP request comprises a POST request, and wherein said encrypted information is included in the body of said POST request.

27. The method of claim 24, wherein said HTTP request comprises a GET request, and wherein said encrypted information is appended to said GET request as a parameter.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein said first set of computer-executable instructions comprises a COM object.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said first set of computer-executable instructions exposes an ENCRYPT method for use by a third set of computer-executable instruction which runs on said first computing device.

30. The method of claim 24, wherein a secret symmetric key is accessible to or known by each of said first computing device and said second computing device, and wherein said first set of computer-executable instructions uses said secret symmetric key to encrypt said information.

31. The method of claim 24, wherein said information includes information identifying an item of content which said second computing device provides.

32. The method of claim 24, wherein said information includes information identifying a purchaser of an item of content.

33. A method of building a client-server request, said method comprising the acts of:

encrypting first information so as to be decryptable by a secret accessible to a first server;

including an address associated with said first server in said client-server request; and

including the encrypted information in said client-server request.

34. The method of claim 33, wherein the encrypted information includes information relating to a transaction to purchase a content item, wherein said first server furthers at least some aspect of said transaction.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the encrypted information includes information which identifies a purchaser of said content item.

36. The method of claim 34, wherein the encrypted information includes information which identifies said content item.

37. The method of claim 34, wherein the encrypted information includes a timestamp.

38. The method of claim 34, wherein said first server provides said content item.

39. The method of claim 33, wherein said secret comprises a symmetric key, and wherein the encrypted information is generated by encrypting cleartext information with said symmetric key.

40. The method of claim 33, wherein said client-server request comprises an HTTP request.

5 41. The method of claim 40, wherein said HTTP request comprises a POST request, and wherein the encrypted information is included in the body of said POST request.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein said HTTP request comprises a GET request, and wherein the encrypted information is appended to said GET request as a parameter.

43. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to perform the method of claim 33.

44. A method of distributing electronic content, said method comprising the acts of:
receiving, at a first computing device from a second computing device, an order for a content item; and
providing, from said first computing device to said second computing device, data comprising:

20 a network address of a third computing device; and
encrypted information;

wherein said third computing device processes said order by using at least some of said encrypted information.

25 45. The method of claim 44, wherein said data comprises an HTTP POST request, and wherein said encrypted information is included in the body of said POST request.

46. The method of claim 44, wherein said data comprises an HTTP GET request.

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47. The method claim 44, wherein said encrypted information includes information identifying said content item.

5 48. The method of claim 44, wherein said encrypted information includes information identifying the individual who issued said order for said content item.

49. The method of claim 44, wherein said encrypted information includes a timestamp.

10 50. The method of claim 44, wherein said data further comprises a hash of said encrypted information, said hash being computed prior to encryption of said information.

15 51. The method of claim 50, wherein said hash is computed using an SHA1 algorithm.

52. The method of claim 44, wherein said content item does not reside on said first computing device.

20 53. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to perform the method of claim 44.

54. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:

25 receiving parameters that identify characteristics of a first transaction between a first client and a first server;
encrypting one or more of said parameters;

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returning said encrypted parameters to said first client in a format such that a second server may receive said encrypted parameters from said first client, validate said first transaction, and initiate a second transaction without any interaction with said first server.

5 55. The computer-readable medium of claim 54, wherein said computer-executable instructions comprise a COM object.

60 56. The computer-readable medium of claim 54, wherein said first transaction relates to the sale of electronic content.

10 57. The computer-readable medium of claim 56, wherein said second transaction comprises downloading said electronic content from said second server to said first client.

15 58. The computer-readable medium of claim 56, wherein said parameters comprise end-use information that enables the individualization of said electronic content.

20 59. The computer-readable medium of claim 54, wherein said parameters include one or more of the following: information identifying a party to said first transaction, and information identifying an item purchased in said first transaction.

60 60. The computer-readable medium of claim 54, wherein said steps further comprise including a timestamp in said encrypted parameters.

25 61. The computer-readable medium of claim 54, wherein said steps further comprise computing a hash of at least some of said encrypted parameters.

60 62. The computer-readable medium of claim 61, wherein said hash is computed using an SHA1 algorithm.

